

**When it was established in 1987 only 4 miles southeast of San Pedro Town, Ambergris Caye, the Hol Chan Marine Reserve was the first reserve of its kind in Central America.**



Straddling the Belize Barrier Reef the reserve's five square miles are divided into three distinctive zones

- Zone A—both inside and outside the reef,
- Zone B-- sea grass beds inside the reef,
- Zone C-- mangroves of southern Ambergris Caye.

Loosely translated in Mayan as “Little Channel,” the Hol Chan Marine Reserve refers to the deep cut or “quebrada” in the barrier reef off Ambergris Caye. with its close proximity to San Pedro and Caye Caulker, visits to the Hol Chan Marine Reserve are the single most popular day tour from San Pedro, Caye Caulker and Belize City.

### **Notable Features**

In the early 1980s fish populations in the area around Hol Chan were declining even as the visitor interest in the area increased. Disputes arose over access to the Hol Chan Cut, which was a productive fishing area, but also popular with snorkelers and divers. Public consultation over the establishment of a marine reserve resulting in the Reserve's management plan that today ensures healthy fishing resources while making the area accessible for tourism related activities.

#### **- Shark Ray Alley**

Located just one mile south of the Hol Chan cut and included within the Hol Chan Marine Reserve is Shark Ray Alley. Once a place where fishermen cleaned their catch, it naturally attracted sting rays and nurse sharks to feed. Shark Ray Alley is now an attraction that offers visitors the rare opportunity to snorkel up close and personal with docile rays and gentle nurse sharks. This is a great photo opportunity.

### **Visitor Experience**

The Hol Chan Marine Reserve visitor center in San Pedro on Caribena Street is open from 9am to 5 pm daily. The visitor center is well stocked with displays, information and brochures about the marine habitats in the area.

